

Baroque Modernity in Latin America: Situating Indigeneity, Urban Indigeneity and the Popular Economy

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This article uses the Bolivian city of El Alto as a lens through which to evaluate the place of urban indigeneity and the popular economy within Latin American modernity. Whilst some express worries over the erosion of indigenous ways of life and others see urban indigenous practices as defying capitalist modernity, I argue that these emergent forms of indigeneity need to be understood as part of the complex, particular historical articulation of modernity in Latin America. Here, colonialism and uneven capitalist development have imbued modernity with a baroque character, containing multiple temporalities and contradictory societal forms, including that of urban indigeneity.

Keywords: baroque modernity, El Alto, Latin America, popular economy, urban indigeneity.

What I see is that in many other countries, in places like Europe and Asia, their culture, their food, their ways of dressing and their languages have been lost. Who decided that they had to be dominated as such? [...] [I]n Bolivia we maintain nature, all that is organic, we have always had an understanding that the environment must be looked after, not utilised, that rubbish should not be dumped in nature, we decide as one [...] however, although we have this education, still we are lacking [...] [I]n a short period of time everything can change, they will make us pay for food, they want to buy us with money, money is not solidarity, it does not cultivate friendships, it makes us fight, it brainwashes us. (Interview, Antonia Rodríguez, 2016)

I arrived in Bolivia in January 2016, seeking to investigate the role of social movements in the government of Evo Morales, a former coca grower originally from the rural *altiplano* (highlands) who had been in power a decade by that point. Over the course of seventeen months of fieldwork, I interviewed over 100 civil society activists and leaders, state officials and academics, and attended numerous marches, protests and meetings in the cities of La Paz, El Alto and Santa Cruz. Urban indigeneity kept on popping up. During my first couple of months in the field I befriended the head of the indigenous

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Baroque Modernity in Latin America

movement, the Confederación Nacional Orgánica de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ Orgánica, Organic Confederation of *Ayllus* and *Markas* of *Qullasullu*), along with members of the youth arm of the movement, the Urban Ayllu. Initially, I was confused by the term: the *ayllu* is the socio-territorial unit of the rural Aymara communities of the Andes, spread across multiple topographical zones and across spiritual worlds, as *ayllus* are comprised of both human and non-human constitutions (Rasnake, 1988; Choque and Mamani, 2003). How could it possibly function in an urban context?

I was also surprised by their vehement opposition to Evo Morales, considered by many to be Bolivia's first indigenous president, and their claims that the loss of indigenous ways of life had only accelerated during the years of his tenure. Stranger still, although framed differently, indigenous government officials inside the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS, Movement Towards Socialism) government of Morales also suggested a similar loss, as the opening quotation from former MAS minister Antonia Rodríguez suggests. In fact, the fear of the erosion of indigeneity was something I repeatedly heard from indigenous groups and activists during my research. Recent waves of urbanisation across Latin America have emptied out indigenous communities in some regions – UN-Habitat (2010) estimates that 30 percent of Latin America's indigenous people lived in cities at the turn of the century – including the Aymara-speaking villages on the *altiplano* (the high plateau which sits between the two mountain corridors of the Andes) surrounding the city of El Alto. The pain and sorrow of this loss is keenly felt by some, as is captured wonderfully by Jorge Sanjinés's classic 1989 film *La nación clandestina* (The Clandestine Nation).

What follows is an attempt to make sense of the apparent metamorphosis of what it means to be indigenous in Latin America, and to tie the threads between some of the incidental findings of my research, initially in the background of the larger project, and the broader historical political and political economic processes at work in the region. I bridge debates on indigeneity vis-à-vis citizenship and on the popular economy in Latin America by turning to insights from Latin American critical Marxism, intellectual production driven by political praxis that grounds its theoretical contributions firmly within the social and political reality here. Drawing on the contributions of José Carlos Mariátegui, René Zavaleta Mercado, Silvia Rivera, Bolívar Echeverría and Verónica Gago, I argue that viewing indigeneity, and urban indigeneity in particular, through the paradigm of *baroque modernity* illuminates how *longue durée* processes of colonialism and capitalist development have interwoven indigenous, Afro and European social, economic and political practices within a colonial context. The *baroque* dimension of modernity underscores both how indigenous peoples live within capitalism without fully internalising its logics (in a state between resistance and resilience) and how indigenous practices and relations transmute modernity itself. In this light, colonialism (and capitalist development) does not displace one set of practices with another, but interweaves and transforms different civilisational threads to produce a complex, multi-dimensional and contested modernity.

In order to present this argument, the article begins by delineating some of the principal features of one of my fieldwork sites, the city of El Alto. I then turn to the political significance of indigeneity in the late twentieth century and intellectual debates on indigenous citizenship and the popular economy. To demonstrate the longer colonial lineage and broader relationship with Latin America's baroque modernity, I place the urban indigeneity found in El Alto in a longer, historical context through outlining how different Latin American critical theorists have tackled the multiple and contradictory character of modernity from the early twentieth century onwards. This shatters the notion of

urban indigeneity as either novel or exceptional whilst simultaneously highlighting the advantages of approaching urban indigeneity as a dialectical part of a broader baroque modernity.

Urban Indigeneity and the Popular Economy in El Alto

A large part of the reason why questions around the changing significance of indigeneity and its relationship with other historical processes came to the fore during my fieldwork is the character of one of my principal field sites: the Bolivian city of El Alto. El Alto is a city forged by neoliberalism (Gill, 2000), and the tsunami of social movements in the period 2003–2005 earned it the label (still worn proudly by many) as a rebel city (Lazar, 2008). These are the features that drew me as a researcher to El Alto, and I spent a significant amount of time with the Federación de las Juntas Vecinales (FEJUVE-El Alto, Federation of Neighbourhood Councils-El Alto) and attending meetings of the MAS-organised School of Political Formation (discussed below) during my research trips.

However, El Alto is also so much more than this. It is home to one of the largest informal marketplaces in Latin America and is, in the eyes of many, the Aymara capital in the Andes (Albó, 2006: 334), with 74.2 percent of *alteños* (inhabitants of El Alto) over the age of 15 self-identifying with this indigenous group in the 2001 census (INE, 2001). It is a city which cannot help but capture the imagination, and I was always bewildered by the appearance of urban indigenous social relations and practices interwoven with harsh occurrences of subordination, domination and appropriation naked for all to see in many parts of the city. It is a place that, in a sense, defied categorisation.

El Alto is a sprawling metropolis that sits high above the bowl containing the city of La Paz at over 4000 m above sea level. Despite being nothing more than five or six latifundia home to some 10,000 indigenous peons at the time of the 1952 revolution, El Alto has since changed beyond recognition, achieving city status in 1988 (Sandóval and Sostres, 1989). The 1953 agrarian reform, the El Niño/La Niña weather event of 1982–1983 and, later, the introduction of neoliberalism through the New Economic Policy in 1985, displaced miners and peasants, forcing them from their encampments and agricultural land respectively and into the city, which had grown to 848,000 inhabitants by 2012 (INE, 2012). The north of the city has been constituted since its creation by Aymara peasant migrants from the *altiplano* around Lake Titicaca, whilst the city's south is more diverse and includes Quechua-speakers from the valleys of Cochabamba and the old mining encampments of Oruro and North Potosí (Sandóval and Sostres, 1989: 31–36).

The city of El Alto is a result of historic processes of self-construction that intensified during the 1980s and 1990s thanks to rapid urbanisation catalysed by neoliberal reforms (Rivera, 1996). Indigenous practices – including rotation and obligation of leadership roles and responsibilities, for example – coupled with interpersonal relationships brought to the city from rural communities were vital to these processes of self-construction, which traced urban indigeneity into the constructed space of El Alto. The current social formation found in El Alto is a product of the transformation and mutation of existing social relations, beliefs, practices and knowledges in the urban context (Tassi, Hinojosa and Canaviri, 2015: 118). Borrowing money from relatives or fictitious kin allows newly arrived migrants entry into the market in the popular

Baroque Modernity in Latin America

economy (explained further below). Ritual co-parenthood, *compadrazgo*, forges fictitious kinship bonds between godparents and the families of their godchildren and gives families access to otherwise out-of-reach economic means (Canessa, 2012a: 18). In the Andes, there is a long history of families exchanging children with godparents (normally on a temporary basis) in return for past or future favours (Buechler and Buechler, 1996: 194). This both provides start-up capital for commercial and service endeavours, and helps build conglomerates allowing popular economy actors to share transport, the costs of a shipping container or a newly constructed shopping mall (Tassi et al., 2013: 124).

Other cultural practices have been modified and reimagined for urban life. *Yatiris* (Andean spiritual/religious leaders) have remained important figures in the local community in El Alto (Tassi et al., 2013: 130). However, their blessings to *pachamama* (Mother Earth) and readings of coca leaves have been put to new uses. A theft or disturbance in popular marketplaces will be investigated through the *yatiri's* reading of coca leaves and new business enterprises will receive their blessing. New taxis, trucks, stalls and shopping malls are all consecrated by *yatiris*, who have seen their knowledge and practices repurposed for the context of urban indigeneity. Similarly, sponsoring the local *fiesta* (festival) continues to be an important part of structuring and maintaining commercial relationships within urban indigenous communities (Tassi, 2010).

In recent years, the explosion of the neo-Andean architecture typified by the *cholet* has quite literally built urban indigeneity into space. *Cholets* are brightly coloured, multi-storied buildings which have come to dominate the skyline of El Alto, their name a playful nod to both *cholos* (discussed below) and alpine chalets. Comprised of several floors of commercial or events space topped with an apartment where the proprietor resides, they are considered a new Aymara or indigenous form of architecture, a demonstration of the newfound pride indigenous people have in Bolivia (Salazar, 2016: 95). As such, *cholets* have captured the imagination of journalists across the world, with the neo-Andean baroque architectural style winning legions of admirers in the international press.

How, then, should we understand El Alto? Do the incongruencies with the dominant social, political and economic categories of (western) social science imply their inapplicability here? Does El Alto defy the logics of capitalism? Fortunately, scholars debating indigeneity and the popular economy recently have come some way in answering these questions, although, as I will show, there are still gaps in theorising transformations to El Alto within broader processes of colonialism and capitalist development.

Indigeneity, Urban Indigeneity and the Popular Economy

For much of the twentieth century (and a long time previously) indigeneity in Latin America was synonymous with rurality and backwardness (see, for example, Weismantel, 2001: 4–5), operating outside or on the frontiers of the modern world. Racialised imaginative geographies, such as those identified by Radcliffe and Westwood (1996), played a central role in shaping mainstream perspectives on indigenous people disseminated through popular and state discourses in much of Latin America (Canessa, 2012a: 214). On the one hand, indigenous peoples were considered cultural anomalies outside the modern world, cultural relics that need to be studied and protected. The study of indigeneity was confined to anthropology (unsurprising given the discipline's colonial genesis), which sought to document (and thereby preserve) the pristine culture of indigenous peoples. On the other hand, they were considered a problem, a barrier to

the modernisation of the continent that had to be overcome. Indeed, the development theories that emerged following World War II – particularly modernisation theory and structuralism – implicitly or explicitly juxtaposed modernity with indigenous communities. In Bolivia, the National Revolutionary government in the 1950s tried to solve the ‘Indian problem’ through *mestizaje* – which ‘implied a distillation of Bolivia’s distinct Spanish and Indian racial and civilisational essences into a blended national unity’ (Hylton and Thomson, 2007: 80) – stripping indigenous people of their ethnicity and recasting them as ‘peasants’, a class category (Larson, 2003; Gotkowitz, 2007).

Territorial social movements and indigeneity as a political category emerged across the continent following the advent of neoliberalism during 1970s – although the form and content of these movements, as José Antonio Lucero (2008) underscores in his study of Bolivia and Ecuador, was shaped by the particular political terrain of different contexts. That is not to say indigenous peoples were not important political actors before this (see Rivera, [1983] 2003; Larson and Harris, 1995; Gotkowitz, 2007), but that movements began to mobilise and organise explicitly around the category of *indigenous*. In Bolivia, a part of this work was done by academic activists working with both highland indigenous movements – particularly through the Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA, Workshop of Andean Oral Histories) organised by, amongst others, Aymara scholar Silvia Rivera – and lowland indigenous movements, principally with the work of Jesuit anthropologist, linguist and co-founder of the Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado (CIPCA, Centre for the Investigation and Promotion of Peasants), Xavier Albó. Across Latin America, many such indigenous movements fed into the formation of what Donna Lee Van Cott (2005) labelled ‘ethnic parties’ – including in Bolivia, where the MAS and Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti (MIP, Indigenous Pachakuti Movement) both emerged from the Confederación Sindical Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB, Trade Union Confederation of Bolivian Peasant Workers) during the 1990s.

This quickly elicited a response from supranational organisations. Indigenous peoples found representation as indigenous peoples in the UN from 1977 onwards (Estes, 2019: 201–202), with the World Bank ‘discovering’ indigenous people in the 1990s (Canessa, 2012a: 2–3). Indigeneity came to be folded into the technocratic language of NGOs during this period, stripping movements of their radical potential. The broader recognition of indigenous groups as cultural groups through neoliberal multiculturalism depoliticised indigenous movements and, at the last instance, reproduced the image of indigenous people as backward and outside of the political and economic progresses of the modern world. This led Rivera, in a moment of frustration, to exclaim that we need a way to understand this new *indio permitido* (permitted Indian) in the context of neoliberalism (see Hale, 2004).

Indigenous Citizenship and the Popular Economy

The recognition of indigenous groups was accompanied by increased academic interest in indigeneity, particularly in places like Bolivia, where a large portion of the population is indigenous and where indigenous movements and parties entered the political scene in full force. Given the strength of indigenous social movements between 2000 and 2005 and the election of an (ostensibly) indigenous Bolivian president in 2005, it is unsurprising that many authors focused on the modalities of inclusion and the new forms of citizenship engendered by the social transformations galvanised by indigenous movements (see, for example, Albó, 2005; Postero, 2007; Lazar, 2008; Canessa, 2012b, 2014).

Baroque Modernity in Latin America

This literature definitively ruptured with the hackneyed assumptions about indigenous peoples, stressing their heterogeneity and the new forms of both indigeneity and urbanity produced by the social impacts of this new indigenous citizenship. Indigeneity is defined by anthropologist Andrew Canessa (2012b: 208) as ‘the enduring power relations that arise out of [a particular] moment in history’, a source of contestation and control. This body of literature is sensitive to the changing place of indigenous peoples in Latin American societies, their fluid relationship with the state and their increasing prevalence within cities. The definition of indigeneity as relational, contested and historically contingent rather than ontologically fixed is the one I follow here.

Whilst evaluating indigeneity through citizenship undoubtedly makes an invaluable contribution, these studies sideline (or sidestep) the economic effects of the emergence of indigenous peoples as citizens, leaving open questions about the interplay between this political inclusion and parallel transformations of the economy through neoliberalism.

This being said, the appearance of new forms of apparently indigenous wealth, especially in places like El Alto, has been addressed in a parallel set of literature on the popular economy in Bolivia. The term *popular economy* emerged from debates over informality in Latin America during the early 1980s through the work of Luis Razeto et al. ([1983] 1990) and José Matos Mar (1984). It pushes back against dominant concepts of informality as a legal condition and captures the particular social and cultural forms used and/or produced to mediate the informal economy (Gago, Cielo and Gachet, 2018). Anthropologists and geographers have underscored the embedded nature of the popular economy in particular places and the way it is constructed through translocal chains that are at once multi-scalar and anchored in the possibilities and limitations of specific localities across the Andes (Tassi, Hinojosa and Canaviri, 2015). The success of the popular economy here, these scholars argue, can only be accounted for by personal relationships of family and kinship that structure economic flows (Tassi et al., 2013; see also Ødegaard, 2010; Müller, 2017).

This literature on the popular economy raises a number of questions about the relationship between urban indigeneity and the popular economy. Firstly, there is the question of whether the indigenous practices central to their arguments are indigenous or *cholola*. *Cholos* are not indigenous nor are they *mestizo*, they are betwixt, standing between Indian/creole, rural/urban and commodity market/community (Seligmann, 1993; Ødegaard, 2018), mediating ‘between those considered as indigenous and nonindigenous people in the marketplace’ (Seligmann, 1989: 698). ‘Cholas are, by definition’, argues Mary Weismantel (2001: xxxviii), ‘at once indian and white: the very embodiment of the notion that Latin American racial categories overlap, or lack clear boundaries’. The category *cholola* emerged as a legal category in colonial Alto Peru to manage the distribution of land, resources and allocate fiscal burdens (Seligmann, 1989; Harris, 1995). It was, from its inception, characterised by a degree of arbitrariness. *Cholola* has thus always been difficult to define and means difficult things to different people at different junctures, at times being synonymous with indigenous, at others with *mestizo*. Here I think the distinction between *cholola* and indigenous is a red herring and instead contend that categorising practices and relations as either *cholo* or indigenous matters little, as they both sit along a colonial spectrum (indigenous/non-indigenous or, in racialised terms, indian/white) designed to organise society. In other words, where the boundary of urban indigeneity is drawn does not really concern me, rather I am interested in the historically contingent ways in which this boundary is (re-)drawn.

The second unresolved question raised by the popular economy literature is the relationship between this indigenous/non-indigenous spectrum and the popular economy.

For Nico Tassi and his collaborators, the introduction of indigenous social and cultural aspects to economic relations within the popular economy represents an innovation that makes the popular economy unique. Tassi (2010: 192) maintains that Aymara traders foment their 'own banking practices based on local religious brotherhoods and produced an economic structure interjecting redistribution and accumulation, self-interest and generosity, communal cooperation and market competition'.

However, as Müller and Colloredo-Mansfeld (2018: 13) stress, 'popular economies are increasingly difficult to delimitate in terms of a distinctive working-class position, ethnic background, or in opposition to mass, national-branded economies'. So, whilst urban indigenous and *chola* relationships and practices are vital for the functioning of the popular economy in El Alto, this does not explain the whole picture, obscuring other important groups also working in the popular economy (e.g. *mestizos*, Asian immigrants and Chinese producers). The popular economy and urban indigeneity are not synonymous neither are they discrete; they do not sit neatly on top of one another and the relationship between the two remains fuzzy at best. The baroque framing I am suggesting here places this relationship front and centre of the analysis.

The third quandary raised but not adequately addressed by writings on the popular economy in Bolivia is the relationship between the popular economy and capitalism. For these scholars, the practices and the different understandings actors have of accumulation, investment and work within the popular economy signal its 'not-quite capitalist' character (see in particular Tassi et al., 2013, ch. 6). These social relations – strengthened through cultural displays of dance fraternities, local fiestas and the reinvestment in the local communities – ostensibly reveal a logic distinct from that of the impersonal relations developed under capitalism. In the words of Müller (2017: 394), the 'transnational connections and local markets' that comprise the popular economy 'are made through the mediation of traders with *social and cultural attributes as well as economic ones*' (emphasis added). In short, the popular economy does not represent the 'ravages of capital untrammelled' because it is 'anchored in the social, cultural and political structures in the lives of those who practice it' (Mathews and Alba Vega, 2012: 11).

This is where I contend that the concept of baroque modernity can help better theoretically situate urban indigeneity and the popular economy in places like El Alto. Baroque modernity connects the dynamics of capitalism with the popular economy and offers a framework through which to evaluate the relationship between the two. It evaluates the continually dialectical transformations of colonised by colonising, oppressed by oppressors, exploited by exploiting and vice versa. It is not that indigeneity came to be marked by cosmopolitan and non-cosmopolitan poles during neoliberalism, as Mark Goodale (2006) has suggested, or that hybridity is an exceptional feature of urban indigeneity, as Tassi and others have argued, but that hybridity is an underlying feature of modernity more broadly across Latin America, in El Alto and beyond. Instead of conceptualising urban indigenous practices and relations as defiance or alternatives, they should be seen as part of the baroque form that modernity has assumed in Latin America.

Baroque Modernity in Latin America

Between June 2016 and January 2017, the MAS organised a series of bi-weekly seminars with invited speakers (who ranged from government ministers to MAS aligned academics) in El Alto. Dubbed the School of Political Formation, the seminar series

Baroque Modernity in Latin America

was designed to reactivate the party's social base in the rebel city following the government's defeat in the 2016 re-election referendum. Every Tuesday and Thursday I would take the cable car up to the classes, stopping to buy a bag of coca leaves on the way. *Pijchando* (chewing coca) with other participants was a great ice breaker, as well as being an important marker of indigeneity for *alteños*. The meetings were marked by the city's indigenous character, with some interventions made in Aymara and others starting with a nod towards the speakers' rural indigenous routes – *¡hermanos y hermanas!* (brothers and sisters!). Participants wore the *chola* fashion of the city, with the men dressed in leather jackets, suit trousers and leather shoes; the women in *polleras* (pleated, multi-layered skirts), vicuña shawls and bowler hats.

Questions and comments directed at the speakers were contradictory, at times fiery, and interlaced with reference to urban indigeneity and the popular economy. The *alteños* present thought of the MAS as *their* government and expected an indigenous president, *hermano* Evo Morales, to transform their city:

We are living in a brutal free market: everything, from used clothes to cheap Chinese goods, enters. So, what example of the socialist communitarian economy functioning can you give me in Bolivia today? Apparently, there is not one, it is a theory and nothing more. Because in the street and the markets where we live, it is a brutal free market, nothing else. (Participant 1 question at School of Political Formation, Anonymous, 2016)

This question, posed by a local resident to the then Minister of Productive Agriculture Verónica Ramos, captures the apparent incongruence between government imaginaries of an alternative economy built upon communitarian practices, and the experiences of the urban, capitalist modernity of El Alto. The questions that *alteños* posed point to multiple, competing visions of modernity and the challenges in understanding quotidian reality through broader concepts such as *indigeneity* or *capitalism*, as another intervention from the same session shows:

El proceso de cambio continues to be capitalist [...]. In capitalism it is all about GDP growth, which does not guarantee the reduction of poverty or a good life. What does it mean to be happy? Happy is to satisfy our needs – food, shelter, clothing, education – and to enjoy our lives. Obviously, you cannot stop producing, so my question is what is the new model that you propose? (Participant 2 question at School of Political Formation, Anonymous 2016)

The question, directed at a representative of the MAS government, also contains the tensions between Bolivia as a capitalist country and a sense, from *alteño* residents, that the MAS government – their government – should be trying to do something different. Whilst it may be tempting to frame this cultural clash as a recent phenomenon, the result of either neoliberalism or the growth indigenous recognition under the government of Evo Morales (2006–2019), I contend it must be placed in a longer, colonial trajectory. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to trace the transmutations of indigeneity in the Andes through the colonial period, I sustain this contention can be made by examining the ways in which Latin American intellectuals grappled with this problem throughout the twentieth century. This elucidates the lineage that passes from concerns raised at the public meeting in El Alto back through history to those faced by indigenous peoples over the past century (and even further back).

Understanding the ways in which the complex, contradictory postcolonial society functioned in early-twentieth-century Peru was one of the central drivers of romantic Marxist José Carlos Mariátegui (2007) in his *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*. Writing in the 1920s, Mariátegui sought to explain the relative economic backwardness and social divisions of Peru through rethinking Marxism from Latin America. He identified the co-existence of a multiplicity of modes of production in Peru and the country's insertion into the world economy at a particular historic moment of capital accumulation as two of the principal reasons for economic backwardness in the country. In his approach, Mariátegui dialectically weaves considerations of 'colonialism and imperialism, uneven and combined development, and racism and indigenous liberation in colonial and early republican Peru' into his analysis (Webber, 2015: 576).

Mariátegui also challenged the dominant Peruvian intellectual currents of the time and tackled the thorny question of the role and place of indigenous communities through a materialist analysis of land, rather than ascribing what he labelled 'the Indian problem' to legal categorisation, morality, religion or education (see, in particular, essays two and three). Land, and especially the use of land by indigenous communities, opened up questions of past and future, for in the Andean socio-spatial unit of the *ayllu*, Mariátegui (2007: 62–65) not only saw shadows of historical 'Inca communism', but also a 'living community' that 'spontaneously manifests obvious possibilities for evolution and development'. Mariátegui thus attempted, argued Michel Löwy (1998: 86), 'to move dialectically beyond [...] dualist thinking caught between the universal and the particular'.

Mariátegui's perspective transcends the perceived exceptionalism of the different guises of indigeneity (including urban indigeneity) and constructs spaces like El Alto as a dialectic part of a larger capitalist and colonial whole. It offers a way to approach the questions about the 'brutal' form assumed by capitalist modernity in El Alto highlighted by my interlocutor, a way of problematising the localised form of society in El Alto and its place in global capitalist dynamics. This helps us, for example, to view *cholets* as Aymara architecture with a different social function to the apartment blocks in La Paz and yet as being constructed by similar economic forces, namely a construction boom catalysed by increased hydrocarbon rents within the Bolivian economy.

These theoretical threads were later taken up by Bolivian social theorist René Zavaleta Mercado during his third (and final) intellectual phase, that of critical Marxism (Dunkerley, 2013: 200). In his essay on Colonel Alberto Natusch's attempted *coup d'état* in November 1979, Zavaleta (2013a[1983]) introduces the concept of *lo abigarrado* in order to understand the weaknesses of liberal democracy in Bolivia and the insurrectionary social coalitions that formed in this moment. Although Bolivian scholars – particular those from the intellectual collective *La Comuna* (see García Linera et al., 2001; Tapia, 2002) – have since tried to pin down the exact meaning of *lo abigarrado*, Zavaleta was purposely elusive in his use of the term, due to his determination, in the words of James Dunkerley (2013: 204), 'to find an alternative that has real explanatory power'. Dunkerley contends that clues to what Zavaleta understood by *lo abigarrado* can be found in references to Ernst Bloch in his posthumously published *Lo nacional-popular en Bolivia* (Zavaleta, 2008[1984]) and in the work of his most well-known student, Silvia Rivera (2003). For Dunkerley, reading *lo abigarrado* through the *non-simultaneity of the simultaneous* offers a lens through which to understand Zavaleta's formulation:

Baroque Modernity in Latin America

Not all people exist in the same Now. They do so only externally, by virtue of the fact that they may all be seen today. But that does not mean that they are living at the same time with others. Rather, they carry earlier things with them, things which are intricately involved. One has one's times according to where one stands corporeally, above all in terms of classes. Times older than the present continue to effect older strata; here it is easy to return or dream one's way back to older times. Certainly, a person who is simply awkward and who for that reason is not up to the demands of [her] position, is only personally unable to keep up. But what if there are other reasons why [she] does not fit into a very modern organisation, such as the after-effects of peasant descent, what if [she] is an earlier type? (Bloch, 1977: 22, cited in Dunkerley, 2013: 210–211)

In reading Zavaleta through Bloch, Dunkerley underscores the relatively and multiplicity of time. He thus offers a lens through which the coexistence of indigenous peoples and capitalist modernity appear as different layers of complex historical stratum that form postcolonial space. Read in these terms, *lo abigarrado* is an attempt to square the circle of modernity in Bolivia, to understand the coequality of different social forms, civilisational forms and modes of production – what Zavaleta (2013b[1982]) labelled a society's *primordial form*.

Notwithstanding questions about the extent to which Bolivian society has transformed since the time of Zavaleta's writing, this heterogeneous or multiple character of modernity in Latin America remains. Zavaleta provides a way to understand the seemingly oxymoronic Urban Ayllu mentioned in the introduction, and its attempts to construct an *ayllu* within an urban setting through mediums such as a Hip Hop, break-dancing and graffiti. Silvia Rivera (2010: 62) later would extend Zavaleta's formulation, arguing that 'it is the practice of *abigarrado* productive collectives – including those that 'produce' circulation – that define the modern condition ... [and that] renews and renovates the colonial condition of society'. For Rivera, the hybridisation implied in *lo abigarrado* is part and parcel of the modality through which colonialism continues to be reproduced in Latin America.

Mexican philosopher Bolívar Echeverría offers a perceptive manner of understanding this hybridity through the concept of the baroque. For Echeverría, the concrete form assumed by modernity in Latin America is the result of:

a process of hybridisation; a conflictive mix of new, imported identities and of its 'modern' political culture with the old identity and traditional political culture; a mix where the new and modern appear too weak to convert themselves into the exclusive reality and where the old is too strong to be entirely eliminated. (Echeverría, 2011: 179)

Modernity in Latin America contains multiple, overlapping and contradictory temporalities, which coalesce into the *appearance* of outward-facing, globalised capitalism juxtaposed with traditional political forms and practices (e.g. indigenous/colonial practices). For Echeverría (2011: 184), whilst modern Latin America may be dominated by capital and Latin American people are prepared to live within capitalism, this does not mean 'an internalisation of positive attitude towards the subordination of the concrete reproduction of life to the reproduction of capital'. On the contrary, a closer look at the everyday Latin American reality 'reveals a reluctance to accept the sacrifice of the

“natural” dynamic of social reproduction to the dynamic of the “self-valorisation of economic value” (Echeverría, 2011: 184).

Echeverría calls this apparent contradiction of operating within but not fully internalising the logic of capitalism – actions between resistance and resilience – the *baroque strategy* of the continent’s labouring classes. This *baroque strategy* can appear as entirely contradictory on the surface. At the School of Political Formation, the same participants would get up one session and lambast a government minister for the lack of industrialisation and job creation, and the next complain about the persistence of capitalism in El Alto. These moments of pragmatism, followed by radicalism from the same individuals as part of the same broader political strategy, is what Echeverría captures through the baroque strategy.

Reading Echeverría through anthropologist Aihwa Ong, Verónica Gago (2015: 21) extends his observations on the baroque to the popular economy in Latin America. Gago uses the baroque to capture the fact that informality is *produced* (rather than residual). By doing so, she underscored the incommensurability of value created by the social and human dimension of the popular economy and exchange value realised through the market. One of the major contributions of Gago’s work is to underscore how the popular economy is not merely a space of subsistence, of surplus populations, of defiance of capitalism, but simultaneously a space of extraction operating under new forms of exploitation and of political potential, a *campo de batalla* (field of struggle) (Gago, 2015: 227–228).

Gago thus weaves together processes of formal subsumption of indigenous and *chola* practices into capitalism so central to the work of Zavaleta (see Tapia, 2019; Thomson, 2019) with the practices and processes from below that have constructed neoliberalism in the popular economy. Gago (2015: 23) stresses the *abigarrada* nature of the popular economy and the multiplicity of temporalities that characterise modernity in Latin America, drawing Echeverría, Rivera and Zavaleta tightly together in the process. By bringing the non-linearity of neoliberalism to the fore – ‘simultaneously completed yet contested, reinterpreted and renewed’ – Gago (2015: 303–304) transforms our understanding of neoliberalism, from the linear geometry of capitalist development to the fractal accumulation of the popular economy, where a multiplicity of temporalities and logics are pulled together in a singular, unstable and contradictory social formation. This allows her to account for the apparently contradictory politics found in the popular economy, which can both act as a space of political radicalism and as capitalism untrammelled.

I extend Echeverría and Gago’s reading of *baroque* to underscore how indigeneity forms and produces a part of the multifaceted and contradictory temporalities of modernity across Latin America. Indigeneity is shaped by ongoing struggles over the incorporation and transformation of colonised peoples in ways that both enable their continued domination and exploitation by capitalist development and offers marginalised peoples potential routes to justice from the colonial state (see Platt, [1982] 2016). Baroque modernity offers a lens through which to grasp not only the changing form of the colonial master’s tools of domination, but also how practices of resistance, subversion and compliance from below mould colonial technologies of domination and the form assumed by modernity itself in postcolonial contexts. That is to say, it provides a way to understand the concurrent pragmatic and revolutionary politics of participants of the School of Political Formation, for example. Within this schema, urban indigeneity is the historically specific iteration of indigeneity in a context of accelerated urbanisation across the continent, of which El Alto is a primary example. Moreover, indigeneity is not unilaterally

Baroque Modernity in Latin America

transformed by modernity, rather than modernity itself – and experiences of modernity by all quarters of society – is also transformed by indigeneity. In short, indigeneity and urban indigeneity are dialectical parts of baroque modernity.

The rationale of tracing theoretical discussion of critical authors studying the changing place of indigenous communities within (post)colonial Andean societies during the twentieth century is twofold. Firstly, the works of Mariátegui, Zavaleta, Rivera, Echeverría and Gago bring into sharp relief the continuities between current transformations of indigeneity through urbanisation and longer colonial trajectories of subordinate integration (and exclusion) of indigenous communities into the colonial state. Secondly, it underscores facets of (urban) indigeneity as an integral part of baroque modernity in Latin America. Treating hybridity as exceptional, deviant or defiant misses the ways in which modernity, more than simply shaping the historical form assumed by indigeneity, is itself produced by different modalities of indigeneity across Latin America, including the urban forms of indigeneity found in El Alto.

Conclusions

The goal of this article has been to draw together peripheral observations on urban indigeneity that emerged during my fieldwork in the Bolivian city of El Alto with a broader discussion of the character of modernity in Latin America. The article has outlined how different authors have tried to conceptualise urban indigeneity and its material basis, the popular economy, as solely occupying the ‘cracks’ between hegemonic modern imaginaries, institutions and practices, as ‘outside’ of, or as ‘deviants’ from that modernity. Drawing on the work of José Carlos Mariátegui, René Zavaleta Mercado, Silvia Rivera, Bolívar Echeverría and Verónica Gago, I have argued that urban indigeneity is an integral part of modernity in Latin America. Here, modernity is multiple, contradictory and contested, a character that, following Echeverría, I label *baroque*.

By drawing on discussions about the essence of modernity in Latin America, I also argued that despite rapid urbanisation and the migration of indigenous people into cities across Latin America, this should not be seen as a rupture from past forms of indigeneity, rather the latest historical iteration of what it means to be indigenous. The alternation of indigenous practices for city life in El Alto gives the city its unique feel and sense that something different is happening here. Simultaneously, urban migration has also transformed rural communities as the younger generations come to the city looking for work, sparking fears of the erosion of culture. It is sometimes easy to be caught up in concerns about loss of culture and identity and to forget that neither is set in stone, and colonialism and capitalism have, between them, been transforming what it means to be indigenous in Latin America for over 500 years. Through looking at the ways intellectuals in Latin America have addressed modernity across the continent from the early twentieth century onwards, I underscored how urban indigeneity (and its ever-changing forms) and the popular economy do not represent a deviation from pure forms of modernity or indigeneity but are a result of the baroque nature of modernity in postcolonial contexts. The framing of baroque, I contend, is particularly powerful as it conceives of indigeneity and modernity and dialectically co-constituted, and allows us to see the ways that indigeneity is articulated through modernity and how modernity is articulated through indigeneity.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the participants of the Indigenous Urbanisation in Latin America workshop, hosted by the University of Sheffield, for their questions and comments on an earlier form of the ideas presented here. P. Wade helpfully identified the relevant economic anthropology literature. He would also like to thank J. Webber, A. Ikemura Amaral and the QMUL Theory Lab group for reading and commenting upon an earlier draft of this article, four anonymous reviewers for their constructive and thorough feedback, and A. Ikemura Amaral, P. Horn, and D. Poets for putting this special issue together. The research was funded by ESRC grant number ES/J500124/1.

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